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11. (U) Opposition Party Candidate to Face Mayor of Zagreb in Second Round Presidential Run-Off: Croatians voted in the first round of presidential elections on December 27. Turnout was low, at only 44 percent (down from 52 percent five years ago). The top two candidates were Ivo Josipovic, candidate of the main opposition Social Democrat Party (SDP), who received 32.4 percent of the vote, and the populist Mayor of Zagreb, Milan Bandic, who received 14.8 percent. Josipovic and Bandic will square off in a second round run-off election on January 10, and we expect that the runoff should be much closer than the first round results indicate. The leading Croatian NGO monitoring the elections, GONG, reported that the vote went smoothly, with only minor problems or irregularities in polling places.

12. (U) Prime Minister Suggests New Senior Military Appointments Note Likely in Near-Term: PM Jadranka Kosor told Croatian media on December 27 that she was still discussing with her advisors whether or not to support changes in top positions within the Croatian Armed Forces. Last week, President Mesic confirmed in a press interview that he is proposing that General Darko Grdic, current head of Military Intelligence Agency (VSOA), be named as the new Chief of the General Staff, with Grdic's deputy Ognjen Preost, taking over at VSOA (reftel). Asked to respond to those comments, Kosor said that, although she supported the President's suggestions, she wonders whether it is the appropriate time for such appointments, since President Mesic's term will end February 2010.  
WALKER